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**Highlands Council Issues Abstract Addressing Growth Control in Planning Area**

Chester, NJ- The New Jersey Highlands Council released an abstract today, *Scoping the Highlands Regional Master Plan: Phase One-Plan Development*, which examines the facts concerning growth in the Highlands Planning Area.

John Weingart, the Highlands Council Chairman, noted that, “The Council is working to design a Regional Master Plan that will be a valuable resource for towns in the Planning Area, whether they are looking to grow, redevelop or conserve their land. The Highlands Act is not a mandate for growth in the Planning Area, rather it is a valuable tool to better manage future growth.”

The Act charges the Council with identifying 4% of the Planning area, 17,737 acres out of 400,000 as voluntary receiving zones for appropriate redevelopment. This 4% target amounts to only a small fraction of the total growth, 136,387 acres, that is currently identified by existing municipal and State planning.

“Municipalities in the Planning Area need to understand what the Regional Master Plan can do for them. This plan is a tool that local officials can use to shape the destiny of their towns to make sure that overdevelopment does not occur,” said Council member and Chester Township Mayor Ben Spinelli. “By working hand in hand with the Council’s planning and economic development staff, communities throughout the Planning Area and throughout the seven Highlands counties who want to redevelop will be able to do so in an intelligent and sustainable way.”

*Scoping the Highlands Regional Master Plan: Phase One-Plan Development* is the second in a series of abstracts being developed by the Highlands Council as part of its commitment to inform the public about the impact of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act on the region.

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